

Amendments to the Claims:

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listing of the claims in the application.

1. (Currently Amended) A method of joining an end of a pair of zipper profiles, the method comprising:

bringing the zipper profiles into engagement with each other at least over an end portion at which the profiles are to be joined;

introducing a heated probe into the engaged end portions of the zipper profiles in order to form a recess in the zipper profile material in the region of the probe, wherein the probe is introduced into the profile end portions in a directional substantially longitudinally of a length of the profiles;

withdrawing the probe; and

~~the end portion of the zipper being free from applied pressure when the probe is introduced into the engaged end portions of the zipper profiles and, after the step of withdrawing the probe, applying external pressure to the end portion of the zipper.~~

2. (previously presented) A method according to claim 1, in which, during the step of applying external pressure, the pressure is applied in the

absence of external heat.

3. (previously presented) A method according to claim 2, in which, during the step of applying external pressure, the pressure is applied as the sole external means of joining the profile end portions.
4. (cancelled)
5. (previously presented) A method according to claim 1, in which the recess is formed at least partially by vaporisation of the zipper profile material.
6. (previously presented) A method according to claim 1, carried out simultaneously on both ends of the zipper profiles.
7. (Currently Amended) An apparatus for joining the ends of a pair of zipper profiles, the apparatus comprising
 - a means for receiving a pair of zipper profile lengths in engagement with each other at least over an end portion at which the profiles are to be joined,
 - a probe which is movable between a first position in which, in use, it is clear of the engaged profile lengths and a second position in which it has penetrated into the material of the end portions, wherein the probe is movable

between its first and second positions in a direction substantially longitudinally of the profiles,

means for heating the probe, and

means for applying external pressure to the zipper profile end portions when the probe is in its first position, ~~the zipper profile end portions being free from applied pressure when the probe is in the second position.~~

8. (cancelled)

9. (previously presented) An apparatus according to claim 7, in which the heating means comprises an electrical heating element within a rear portion of the probe.

10. (previously presented) An apparatus according to claim 7, including a further said probe, heating means and external pressure means at the opposite end of the receiving means.

11 – 12. (canceled)